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United for Quality Care

February 22, 2023  
SEIU District 1199 New England  
Before the Human Services Committee

*In Support of SB 957 AN ACT CONCERNING THE OVERSIGHT OF HEALTH CARE IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH.*

Good afternoon Senator Anwar, Representative McCarthy Vahey, and members of the Public Health Committee. District 1199NE represents 26,000 healthcare workers in both the public and private sector in Connecticut. This includes 6,500 state employees, approximately 600 of whom are front line health care workers in the Connecticut Department of Corrections. We submit this testimony in support of SB 957.

Access to healthcare for incarcerated individuals are protected under the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution of the United States, which respectively prohibit cruel and unusual punishment and guarantee proper and adequate healthcare to incarcerated individuals under the due process clause.

Despite this, healthcare in prisons have been substandard, leading not only to the sickness and suffering of Department of Corrections (DOC) inmates, but also the sickness and suffering of DOC staff. This was especially true during the Covid-19 pandemic because of a lack of adequate testing, masks, gowns, etc., as well as the inability to quarantine.

An estimated 40% of incarcerated people in the United States have a chronic disease. These health issues often go undiagnosed, and some cases may be the cause of incarceration to begin with. Additionally, inmates have a high chance of suffering from physical or mental trauma because of substance abuse, prison violence, or lack of adequate air-conditioning in DOC facilities; and prisoners' pleas for medical attention often go ignored.

Access to quality healthcare should be a right for all human beings, including those who are incarcerated.

Please support SB 957. Thank you for your time.